

EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

UNFAIRNESS IN TAX CODE:
MARRIAGE TAX PENALTY

HON. JERRY WELLER

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 8, 2000

Mr. WELLER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to highlight what is arguably the most unfair provision in the U.S. Tax Code: the marriage tax penalty. I want to thank you for your long term interest in bringing parity to the tax burden imposed on working married couples compared to a couple living together outside of marriage.

I want to thank both you and Chairman ARCHER for the pledge to bring H.R. 6, the Marriage Tax Elimination Act, to the floor for consideration before Valentine's Day. This is truly one of the best Valentine's Day presents we can give to America's working couples. As you know, H.R. 6, as considered by the Ways and Means Committee, will provide \$182 billion in marriage penalty relief over 10 years. This is a significant increase over the \$45 billion proposal offered by President Clinton just before this year's State of the Union Address. Ultimately, as a result of H.R. 6, 28 million working couples will receive up to \$1,400 in marriage tax penalty relief.

This month President Clinton gave his State of the Union Address outlining many of the things he will spend the budget surplus on. House Republicans want to preserve 100 percent of the Social Security surplus for Social Security and Medicare and use the non-Social Security surplus for paying down the debt and to bring fairness to the Tax Code.

A surplus provided by the bipartisan budget agreement which: cut waste; put America's fiscal house in order; and held Washington's feet to the fire to balance the budget.

While President Clinton parades a long list of new spending totaling \$72 billion in new programs—we believe that a top priority after saving Social Security and paying down the national debt should be returning the budget surplus to America's families as additional middle-class tax relief.

This Congress has given more tax relief to the middle class and working poor than any Congress of the last half century.

I think the issue of the marriage penalty can best be framed by asking these questions: Do Americans feel it's fair that our tax code imposes a higher tax penalty on marriage? Do Americans feel it's fair that the average married working couple pays almost \$1,400 more in taxes than a couple with almost identical income living together outside of marriage? Is it

right that our Tax Code provides an incentive to get divorced? In fact, today the only form one can file to avoid the marriage tax penalty is paperwork for divorce. And that is just wrong!

Since 1969, our tax laws have punished married couples when both spouses work. For no other reason than the decision to be joined in holy matrimony, more than 21 million couples a year are penalized. They pay more in taxes than they would if they were single. Not only is the marriage penalty unfair, it's wrong that our Tax Code punishes society's most basic institution. The marriage tax penalty exacts a disproportionate toll on working women and lower income couples with children. In many cases it is a working women's issue.

Let me give you an example of how the marriage tax penalty unfairly affects middle class married working couples.

For example, a machinist, at a Caterpillar manufacturing plant in my home district of Joliet, makes \$30,500 a year in salary. His wife is a tenured elementary school teacher, also bringing home \$30,500 a year in salary. If they would both file their taxes as singles, as individuals, they would pay 15%.

MARRIAGE PENALTY EXAMPLE

	Machinist	School teacher	Couple	H.R. 6
Adjusted Gross Income	\$31,500	\$31,500	\$63,000	\$63,000
Less Personal Exemption and Standard Deduction	6,950	6,950	12,500	13,900
Taxable Income	24,550	24,550	50,500	(Singles x2) 49,100
Tax Liability	(x .15) 3682.5	(x .15) 3682.5	(Partial x .28) 8635	(x .15) 7,365
Marriage Penalty			1270	
Relief				1270

But if they chose to live their lives in holy matrimony, and now file jointly, their combined income of \$61,000 pushes them into a higher tax bracket of 28 percent, producing a tax penalty of \$1,400 in higher taxes.

On average, America's married working couples pay up to \$1,400 more a year in taxes than individuals with the same incomes. That's serious money. Millions of married couples are still stinging from April 15th's tax bite and more married couples are realizing that they are suffering the marriage tax penalty.

Particularly if you think of it in terms of: a down payment on a house or a car; one year's tuition at a local community college; or several months' worth of quality child care at a local day car center.

To that end, U.S. Representative DAVID MCINTOSH (R-IN) and U.S. Representative PAT DANNER (D-MO) and I have authored H.R. 6, The Marriage Tax Elimination Act.

H.R. 6, The Marriage Tax Elimination Act, as considered by the House Ways and Means Committee, will increase the 15 percent tax bracket (currently at 15 percent for the first \$26,250 for singles, whereas married couples filing jointly pay 15 percent on the first

\$43,850 of their taxable income) to twice that enjoyed by singles; H.R. 6 would extend a married couple's 15 percent tax bracket to \$52,500. Thus, married couples would enjoy an additional \$8,650 in taxable income subject to the low 15 percent tax rate as opposed to the current 28 percent tax rate and would result in up to \$1,200 in tax relief.

Additionally the bill will increase the standard deduction for married couples (currently \$7,350) to twice that of singles (currently at \$4,400). Under H.R. 6, the standard deduction for married couples filing jointly would be increased to \$8,800.

H.R. 6 enjoys the bipartisan support of 233 cosponsors along with family groups, including: American Association of Christian Schools, American Family Association, Christian Coalition, Concerned Women for America, Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, Family Research Council, Home School Legal Defense Association, the National Association of Evangelicals and the Traditional Values Coalition.

It isn't enough for President Clinton to suggest tax breaks for child care. The President's

child care proposal would help a working couple afford, on average, three weeks of day care. Elimination of the marriage tax penalty would give the same couple the choice of paying for three months of child care—or addressing other family priorities. After all, parents know better than Washington what their family needs.

We fondly remember the 1996 State of the Union address when the President declared emphatically that, “the era of big government is over.” We must stick to our guns, and stay the course. There never was an American appetite for big government. But there certainly is for reforming the existing way government does business. And what better way to show the American people that our government will continue along the path to reform and prosperity than by eliminating the marriage tax penalty.

Ladies and Gentlemen, we are running a \$3 trillion surplus. It's basic math. It means Americans are already paying more than is needed for government to do the job we expect of it. What better way to give back than to begin with mom and dad and the American family—the backbone of our society.

● This “bullet” symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.

We ask that President Clinton join with Congress and make elimination of the marriage tax penalty . . . a bipartisan priority. During the State of the Union Address this year, the President signaled his willingness to work to eliminate the marriage tax penalty. We must send him a bill to eliminate the marriage penalty suffered by 28 million American working couples.

The proposal offered by the President to reduce the marriage tax penalty is a good start, but it is not enough! By doubling the standard deduction, only couples who do not itemize their income taxes receive the benefits of tax relief. In order to provide relief to couples who itemize, mainly homeowners, we must address the difference in the income tax brackets. If we follow only the President's plan, the result will be a marriage tax penalty against couples who are homeowners and couples who contribute to charities. This is not right and it is not fair!

Speaker HASTERT and House Republicans have made eliminating the marriage tax penalty a top priority. In fact, we plan to move legislation out of the House before Valentine's Day.

Last year, President Clinton and Vice-President GORE vetoed our efforts to eliminate the marriage tax penalty for almost 28 million married working people. The Republican effort would have provided about \$120 billion in marriage tax relief. Unfortunately, President Clinton and Vice-President GORE said they would rather spend the money on new government programs than eliminate the marriage tax penalty.

This year we ask President Clinton and Vice-President GORE to join with us and sign into law a stand-alone bill to eliminate the marriage tax penalty.

Of all the challenges married couples face in providing home and health to America's children, the U.S. Tax Code should not be one of them. The greatest accomplishment of the Republican Congress this past year was our success in protecting the Social Security Trust Fund and adopting a balanced budget that did not spend one dime of Social Security—the first balanced budget in over 30 years that did not raid Social Security.

Let's eliminate The Marriage Tax Penalty and do it now!

RECOGNIZING THE SUPER BOWL CHAMPION LONGMEADOW HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL TEAM

HON. RICHARD E. NEAL

OF MASSACHUSETTS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 8, 2000

Mr. NEAL of Massachusetts. Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize the unprecedented accomplishments of the 1999 Longmeadow High School football team. Longmeadow became the first Western Massachusetts team to win three straight titles. The Lancers captured the Division II Super Bowl with a 36-21 victory over Shrewsbury.

Longmeadow could not have asked for a better beginning as they scored on all five possessions in the first half. Running back

Winston McGregor led the way with 162 yards rushing and three touchdowns. Quarterback Justin Vincent was impressive with 118 yards passing, and the Lancer defense shut out their opponents in the fourth quarter. As always, credit must be given to the linemen who gave Vincent the time to pick apart the Shrewsbury defense and McGregor the holes through which to run.

Longmeadow Head Coach Alex Rotsko has built an impressive program at Longmeadow. The Lancers, having now three Super Bowls in a row, will be the odds on favorite in the coming season. Despite losing leaders like McGregor and Ryan McCarthy to graduation, Coach Rotsko will have his charges ready to defend their title once more, a situation with which the Lancers are intimately familiar.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud and honored to congratulate the 1999 Longmeadow High School football team. Winning a title once is something to be remembered, but winning three in a row is the start of a dynasty. I wish Coach Rotsko and his Lancers the best of luck in the 2000 season, as they return once again to defend their Super Bowl title.

HONORING JUDGE BRUCE BALTER

HON. EDOLPHUS TOWNS

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 8, 2000

Mr. TOWNS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Judge Bruce Balter, who received the Holocaust Education award in recognition of his outstanding efforts to teach lessons of the Shoah to today's generation. The award was presented by Joe Hynes, District Attorney in Brooklyn, who commended Judge Balter for his remarkable work.

Judge Balter has a long and distinguished record of public service to the Jewish community of New York. He is a recipient of the State Medal of Israel, and has written and produced three television documentaries on the Holocaust, which have been shown on PBS and other television shows throughout the country. In addition to his television work, he has coordinated and hosted the Civil Court Holocaust Memorial Remembrance each year since being elected to the judiciary. He lectures and takes student groups on tours of the Museum of Jewish Heritage and the U.S. Holocaust Museum in Washington, D.C.

Judge Balter's list of accomplishments, though, far exceeds just his work for the Holocaust. He holds the rank of Lt. Colonel in the New York guard. He is the current chairman of the surrogate's court committee of the Brooklyn Bar Association. He lectures high school students throughout the city on African-American, Jewish, and Hispanic relations. The Judge was also past counsel for prominent Sephardic schools and organizations and currently is a board member of the Council of Jewish Organizations of Flatbush and Director of the Association of Jewish Court Attaches.

It is Judge Balter's drive for accomplishment and concern for the community that has garnered him the Community Justice Award from the Appellate Division—the highest court in Brooklyn. It is important that we continue to

honor such individuals, whose efforts and accomplishments are an inspiration to us all. Please join me in acknowledging the outstanding community service of Judge Bruce Balter.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. CHARLES F. BASS

OF NEW HAMPSHIRE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 8, 2000

Mr. BASS. Mr. Speaker, I was regrettably absent on Tuesday, February 1, and consequently missed a recorded vote on H.R. 1838. Had I been present, I would have voted "yea" on rollcall vote No. 5.

TRIBUTE TO LOS ANGELES MISSION COLLEGE

HON. HOWARD L. BERMAN

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 8, 2000

Mr. BERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize an outstanding educational institution in my community, Los Angeles Mission College. On February 10, 2000, Los Angeles Mission College will celebrate its 25th Anniversary.

Los Angeles Mission College was established to serve the northeast San Fernando Valley communities of Sylmar, San Fernando, Mission Hills, Lakeview Terrace, Arleta, Pacoima, Panorama City, Granada Hills, North Hills, Chatsworth, Porter Ranch, Sun Valley and Sunland-Tujunga. From an initial class of 1,228 students, enrollment has grown to include over 7,000 students per year. It has the fastest-growing enrollment in the L.A. Community College District. The College has enabled more than 100,000 students to earn college degrees and occupational certificates, or transfer to baccalaureate granting institutions.

With its strong record for developing innovative community based programs, Los Angeles Mission College has proven not just to be a leader among community colleges, but to be the embodiment of those values and ideals that make community colleges special. The College has developed successful employment directed programs, occupational transfer curricula, dynamic partnerships with local business and civic organizations, inventive technology applications and numerous workforce development programs. The College is unsurpassed in ensuring that its predominant first generation college students succeed in today's competitive marketplace. All of this is especially remarkable considering that its student population and financial needs have grown exponentially faster than available resources.

I have attended and enjoyed many programs at Mission College and can, therefore, attest firsthand to the high spirit and love of learning to be found on its campus. Furthermore, I have regularly relied on Mission College students to assist me in my district office where they have served as interns and staff. I am greatly impressed by the caliber and